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ABSTRACT

The Teachers College at Emporia State University sponsors a biennial survey to measure the attitudes of Kansans toward their public schools. The results of the 1993 survey are reported here (the survey was patterned after the National Gallop Poll on public education). The report opens with details of the research procedures, which includes overviews of data analysis and sample selection. Survey findings are presented next. Kansans gave their local public schools significantly better grades (59 percent gave them an A or B--a 4 percent decrease from 1991) than people nationally (47 percent gave them an A or B--a 7 percent increase from 1992) give their schools. Survey opinions are grouped under various categories and include ratings of local teachers, perceptions of teachers' salaries, estimations of teachers' salaries, whether to move a student to a different school, the quality of public schools, education vouchers, problems facing Kansas' schools, the increase of violence, requirements for community service, a ten-month school year, how to expand the school year, quality performance accreditation, school-financing legislation, evaluating public officials, preschool programs in public schools, and strategies for reducing teenage violence. The survey sample's composition is described at the end. (RJM)

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ED 417 462

KATE VIII

KANSANS' ATTITUDES TOWARD EDUCATION

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BACKGROUND OF STUDY

In the spring of 1980, The Teachers College at Emporia State University conducted an intensive survey of the attitudes of Kansans toward the public schools in their communities. Patterned after the national Gallup Poll on public education, the Emporia State project was named KATE (Kansans' Attitudes Toward Education).

Funding for the survey is currently being provided by The Teachers College at Emporia State University and the State Board of Education. The cooperation of the State Board of Education deserves special mention: Without that agency's encouragement and financial support, it is doubtful that this poll or previous polls could have been completed.

The response of the general public and special interest groups to the report of the KATE project was such that university officials decided to repeat the study periodically. Thus, Kate II through VIII have been conducted biennially.

The researchers in this study also acknowledge the significant contribution of the Gallup Poll toward their project. Similarity with Gallup's annual nationwide survey on public education is most evident in the general areas of (1) conceptualization and (2) the replication and modification of certain questions. The KATE poll does depart significantly with regard to (1) interviewing methodology and (2) several of the questions employed in the poll. Specifically, the KATE survey utilizes telephone interviewing techniques to ascertain attitudes while the Gallup poll employs a personal interview technique. Also, several of the questions in the KATE poll are developed to focus on specific Kansas issues.

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

Analysis of Data

It should be noted that, in this report, all variables are not covered for each question due to the multiplicity of variables and the limitation of space; however, data for those variables which appear to be most significant are included. A brief summary pertaining to the data for each question is provided.

Allowance must be made for statistical variation, especially in the application of findings for groups where few respondents were interviewed. Every effort was made to recognize bias in sample selection and to minimize this error whenever possible. Projected error rate is plus or minus 3.5 percent.

Sample Selection

The procedures employed in determining the sample consisted of (1) identifying all telephone directories serving residents in the state of Kansas and (2) establishing a systematic procedure for selecting at random from the telephone listings the residents to be included in the poll. All telephone directories serving Kansas residents were located in the Kansas State Library.

A total of 888,470 residential telephone listings was identified as the total population. A systematic random sampling procedure was used by researchers to select 876 listings. Also, a procedure for the selection of replacement listings was established.

The sample used in this survey involved a total of 876 adults (18 years of age and older). Four sample grids were developed to enhance the randomization of individuals within each household.

Grading Local Schools

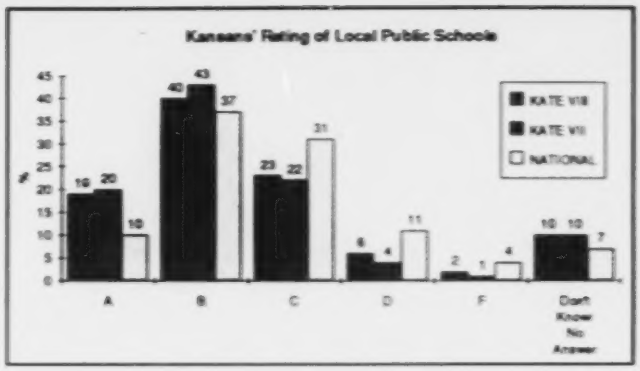
Once again, Kansans believe local public schools are doing a good job in general. Nearly 60 percent of respondents gave schools a grade of A or B. This was a slight decrease from 1991. In 1993 there was also a slight increase in grades of D and Fail.

On the national level, however, respondents' grades of A or B showed the largest one-year increase since the question was first asked in 1974 -- up to 47 percent from 40 percent in 1992. The question:

> Students are often given the grades A-B-C-D or Fail to denote the quality of their school work. Suppose the public schools themselves, in your community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public school in your community--**A-B-C-D** or **Fail**?

Parents whose children attend public schools continue to give local public schools higher marks than parents whose children attend private schools. In 1993, 71 percent of parents with children in public schools gave schools an A or B. Only 44 percent of parents with children in private school gave the same grade.

	A %	B %	C %	D %	Fail %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Kansas Totals	**19**	**40**	**23**	**6**	**2**	**10**
Respondents with-						
Children in public schools	21	50	22	4	1	2
Children in private schools	11	33	15	7	7	27
No children	18	36	24	7	2	13
Area of residence						
Northwest	31	46	17	0	0	6
Southwest	29	34	24	5	0	8
North Central	21	45	21	4	0	9
South Central	17	46	25	2	0	10
Sedgwick	11	25	34	13	4	13
Northeast	16	45	21	5	0	13
Wyandotte/Johnson Counties	21	45	13	4	3	14
East Central	18	42	25	4	1	10
Southeast	28	36	19	9	2	6

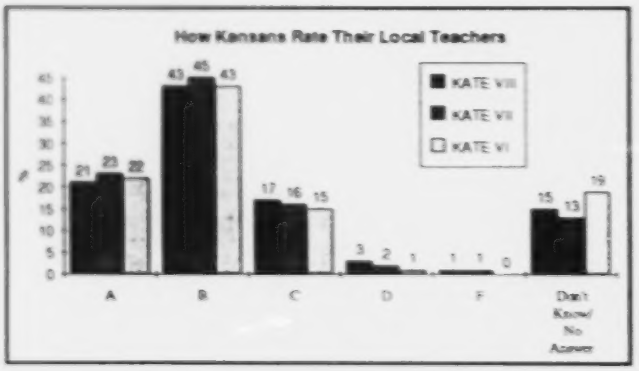


Grading Local Teachers

In 1993, 64 percent of respondents gave local teachers a grade of A or B. This is down slightly from the 1991 survey, in which 68 percent of respondents gave an A or B. In general, responses to this question have remained steady over the past six years. The question:

> Now, what grade would you give the teachers in the public schools in your community--**A, B, C, D,** or **Fail**?

As would be expected, parents whose children attend public schools gave teachers much higher marks than respondents with no children. The fact that parents would relate to their children's teachers on a more personal level may well explain the overwhelming support.



Respondents with	A %	B %	C %	D %	Fail %	Don't Know/ No answer %
Children in public schools	26	50	17	3	1	3
Children in private schools	11	48	7	0	0	34
No children	17	40	18	3	2	20

How Kansans Perceive Teachers' Salaries

More than 40 percent of respondents think that teachers are not paid enough. Only 3 percent, however, believe teachers' salaries are too high. A full 39 percent believe salaries are about right. The question:

> Do you believe that salaries for teachers in your community are **too high**, **too low**, or **about right**?

More than one-half of the respondents age 18 to 34 believe teachers' salaries are too low. Of those age 18 to 24, 59 percent believe salaries are too low; 54 percent of age 25 to 34 held a similar view.

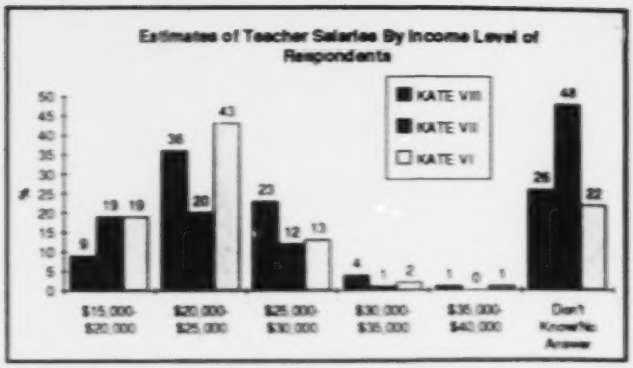
By contrast, only 24 percent of respondents age 65 and older believe teachers' salaries are too low. Considering that older people have less involvement with schools and faculty, this result is somewhat expected.

	Too High %	Too Low %	About Right %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
KATE VIII	3	43	39	15
KATE VII	4	46	40	10
KATE VI	2	46	40	12
Respondents Age				
18 - 24	0	59	30	11
25 - 34	2	54	26	18
35 - 49	4	46	37	13
50 - 64	3	40	41	16
65 and older	5	24	56	15

How Much Do Teachers Make?

Respondents in 1992 estimated teachers' salaries higher than in the past two KATE studies (1989 and 1991). In 1993, more than 23 percent of those surveyed thought teacher salaries were between $25,000 and $30,000. In addition, respondents who earn salaries of $25,000 or more were more likely to estimate teachers' salaries higher than Kansans who earn less. The question:

> Would you say that the average teacher's salary in your school district is between $15,000 and $20,000; $20,000 and $25,000; $25,000 and $30,000; $30,000 and $35,000 or $35,000 and $40,000?



	$15,000-$20,000 %	$20,000-$25,000 %	$25,000-$30,000 %	$30,000-$35,000 %	$35,000-$40,000 %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Respondents with-						
Income less than $15,000	13	27	16	1	0	43
Income $15,000-$25,000	13	35	17	1	1	33
Income $25,000-$35,000	9	37	24	2	1	27
Income more than $35,000	6	41	29	8	1	15
Education						
Non High School Graduates	15	15	11	0	2	57
High School Graduates	9	33	19	3	1	35
College (No Degree)	10	41	21	4	0	24
College (Degree)	7	38	31	7	1	16

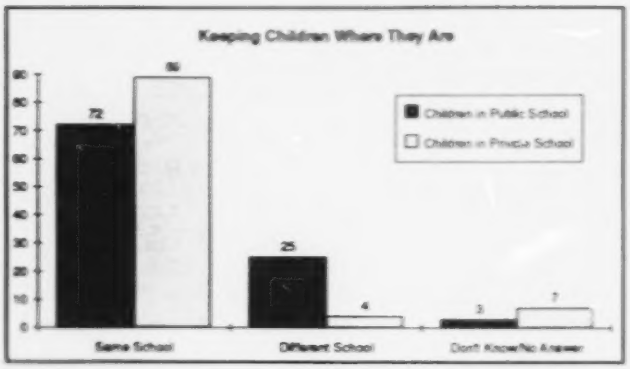
Keeping Children Where They Are

In this two-part question, more than 72% of the respondents said that, given the choice of any school in their community, they would leave their child in his or her current school.

Of the 25 percent of parents with children in public schools who expressed a desire for their children to attend different schools, 16 percent would send their children to another public school; 73 percent to a parochial or private school; and 8 percent to a home school.

> If you could choose your children's schools among any of the public, parochial or private schools in your community, would you choose the schools they now attend or different ones? If different one, would your choice be a public school, a parochial school, private school or a home school?

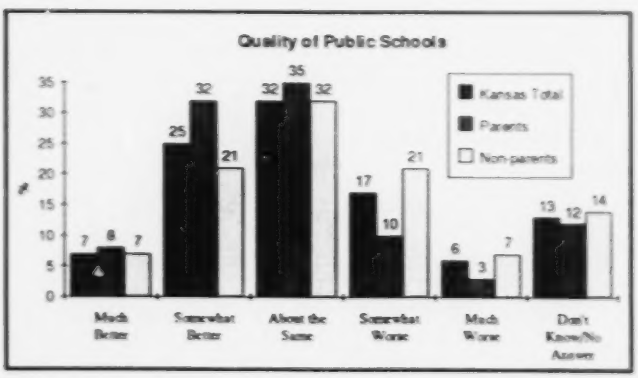
	Public School %	Parochial School %	Private School %	Home School %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
If Different School					
Parents with children in public schools	16	34	39	8	3



Quality of Public Schools

Nearly one-third of Kansans (32 percent) believe public schools are either much better or somewhat better than they were five years ago. Another 32 percent said schools stayed about the same, and 22 percent felt schools had gotten worse. These results are generally in keeping with KATE VII and KATE VI results, although more people in KATE VIII expressed concern with the overall improvement of schools. The question:

> Would you say that the overall quality of public schools in your community is much better, about the same, somewhat worse, or much worse than it was five years ago?

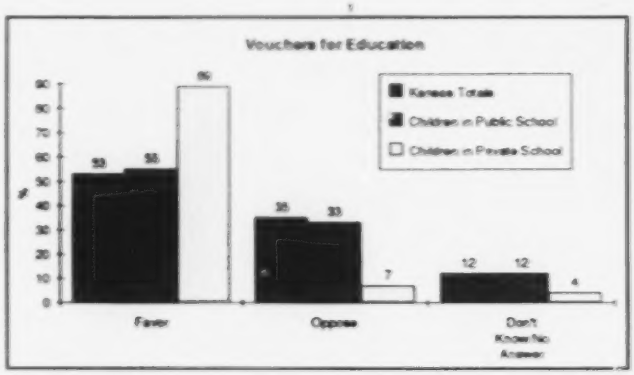


Vouchers for Education

More than one-half of the respondents favored an educational voucher system in Kansas. Not surprisingly, parents whose children attend private schools overwhelmingly support a voucher system. The question:

> Several states are now implementing experimental programs which allow a certain amount of the state money for each child's education. The parents can then send the child to any public, parochial or private school they choose. This is often called the voucher system. Would you favor or oppose the adoption of a voucher system in the state of Kansas?

Respondents in seven of the nine regions held similar views regarding the implementation of a voucher system in Kansas. However, Kansans in Sedgwick and Wyandotte/Johnson regions, strongly favored a voucher system with a strong majority of nearly 63 percent.



	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Kansas Totals	53	35	12
Area of Residence			
Northwest	43	43	14
Southwest	39	46	15
North Central	48	36	16
South Central	52	35	13
Sedgwick County	65	25	10
Northeast	48	36	16
Wyandotte/Johnson Counties	60	32	8
East Central	43	42	15
Southeast	55	38	7

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Problems Facing Kansas Schools

The percentage of Kansans who believe crime and gangs are the biggest problems facing schools has tripled since 1991. In that year, crime didn't even make the 10 percent cut, garnering only 7 percent of the responses.

In 1993, however, 24 percent of the respondents believed crime was a big problem. In contrast, only 13 percent of respondents nationally believed the same thing. Still, in 1993, respondents consider lack of discipline the number one problem.

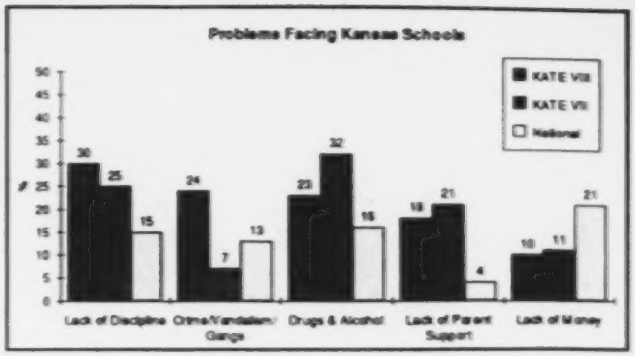
In KATE surveys, school problems are ranked according to respondents' answers to the following question:

> What do you think are the biggest problems that the public schools in your community have to deal with today?

Because this question is open-ended, categories will not total 100 percent.

In all, 14 possible responses ranging from racism to school buildings being in bad condition were mentioned by 5 percent or fewer respondents.

	Kansas Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Private School Parents %
Lack of discipline	30	30	27	37
Crime/vandalism/ gangs	24	27	21	30
Drugs/alcohol	23	24	20	26
Lack of parent interest	18	16	24	19
Lack of money	10	8	14	0
Have students who don't care/don't want to be there	6	6	7	4
Don't teach basics anymore	5	5	5	11
Overcrowding	4	3	7	4
Lack of teacher interest	4	3	6	4



Increase of Violence

More than one-half of those polled believe that violence has increased in public schools. Another 35 percent think violence is about the same. Only 4 percent believe violence has decreased.

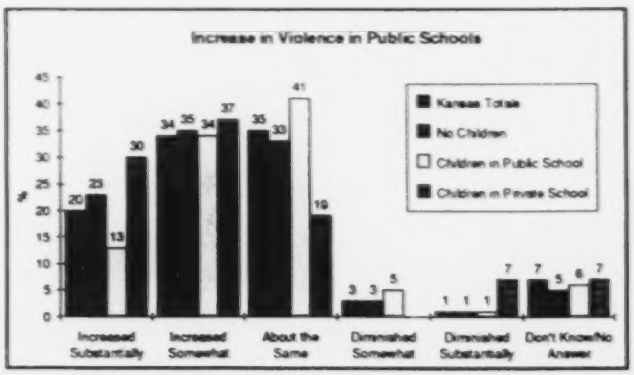
Parents were more positive in their assessments than were respondents without children. Only 13 percent of parents with children in public schools thought violence had increased substantially, versus 23 percent of non-parents. Of the parents, those whose children attend public schools were much more positive than parents whose children attend private schools. The question:

> In your opinion has violence in your local public schools increased substantially, increased somewhat, remained about the same, diminished somewhat, or substantially diminished? If the answer is "increased substantially" or "increased somewhat," what do you feel caused this increase in violence in your public schools?

Because the second part of the question is open-ended, its totals will not equal 100 percent.

According to those respondents who believe violence in schools has increased, the number one reason given for the increase is failure of parents to supervise children.

In addition, parents whose children attended public or private schools believed that gang influence and an increase in violence in the country were contributing factors.



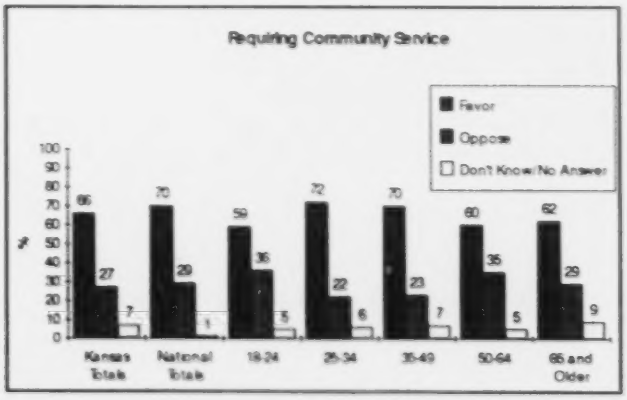
	Kansas Totals %	No Children in School %	Children in School Public & Private %
Failure of parents to supervise their children	42	43	39
Gang influence	13	13	13
General increase in violence in the country	10	8	13
Drugs/alcohol	8	10	6
Availability of firearms	6	6	5
Failure of the schools to deal effectively with violence	6	9	5

Requiring Community Service

Two-thirds of the people surveyed approve of community service as a requirement for graduation. This was, however, slightly lower than the national figure of 70 percent approval. The question:

> Would you favor or oppose a requirement that all students in the local public schools perform some kind of community service in order to graduate?

Kansans age 25 to 49 were even more in favor of a community service requirement than was the sample as a whole. This group, commonly called baby boomers, came of age believing in the Peace Corps and other forms of community service.

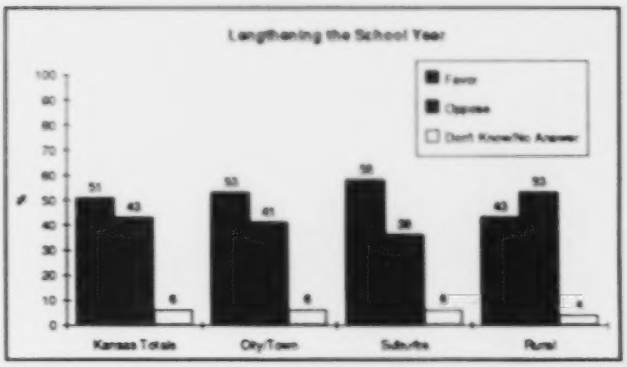


Ten-Month School Year

Kansans' opinions of a 10-month school year have not changed substantially since 1991. In 1991, 51 percent favored a 10-month school year versus 41 percent opposed while in 1993, 51 percent favored and 43 percent opposed a 10-month school year. The question:

> In some nations, students attend school as many as 240 days a year as compared to about 180 days in the United States. How do you feel about extending the public school year in your school district by 30 days, making the school year about 210 days or 10 months? Do you favor or oppose this idea?

This question was rephrased in the 1993 national poll, but 52 percent still favored increasing the amount of time students spend in school. Increasing the number of school days (47 percent) or the number of hours in the school day (35 percent) were the two most popular alternatives nationally.



	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Kansas Totals	51	43	6

How To Expand the School Year

If the school year were increased to 210 days, more than one-half of the respondents would prefer a 10-month school year with a summer vacation -- perhaps because they are used to an extended vacation at the completion of the school year. Only 37 percent said they would favor a four-part school year. The question:

> Let's assume that the school year is increased from 180 to 210 days. Which would you prefer: a ten-month school year with a summer vacation or a school year divided into four parts separated by three four-week breaks?

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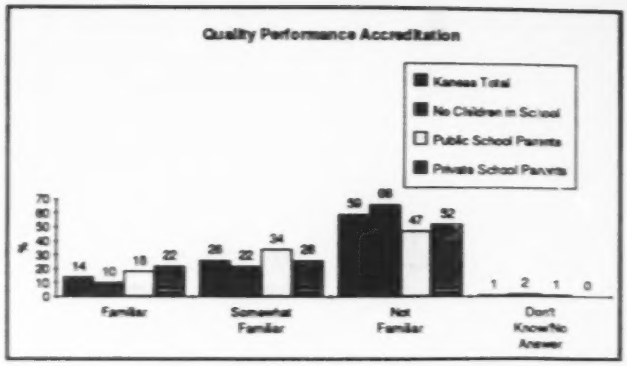
It is significant that nearly 40 percent of respondents embraced a concept relatively unheard of in Kansas. In fact, the Northeast and Wyandotte/Johnson counties regions preferred the four-part school year over a 10-month school year. These regions include the Topeka, Kansas City and Shawnee Mission school systems.

	Ten-month School Year %	Four-part School Year %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Kansas Totals	55	37	8
Area of residence			
Northwest	63	31	6
Southwest	66	27	7
North Central	61	32	7
South Central	66	26	8
Sedgwick County	54	38	8
Northeast	44	45	11
Wyandotte/Johnson Counties	41	52	6
East Central	55	37	8
Southeast	58	34	8

Quality Performance Accreditation

Nearly 60 percent of those surveyed said they were not familiar with Quality Performance Accreditation, a system of accrediting Kansas elementary and secondary schools. Only 14 percent indicated they were familiar with the program, with 26 percent somewhat familiar. Although parents of schoolchildren were more likely to know about QPA, nearly one-half of parents were not familiar. The question:

> Q.P.A. which stands for Quality Performance Accreditation is a new system for accrediting the elementary and secondary schools in the State of Kansas. This accreditation program promotes, in part, the improvement of school and student performance through attention to student academic performance, community involvement in the schools, expectations for student learning and the school climate for learning. Would you say that you are **familiar, somewhat familiar** or **not familiar** with this new system of accrediting our schools in Kansas.



School Financing Legislation

More than one-half of the respondents favor the new school financing method that provides similar funding for all districts. This result is somewhat surprising considering that counties in the southwest part of the state threatened secession over the matter and larger school districts tested the legality in the state courts.

Indeed, only in Wyandotte and Johnson counties did more respondents oppose the system than favored it. The question:

> In 1992, Kansas lawmakers passed a new way to finance our public schools that provided for similar tax levies and expenditures per student in all unified schools in the State of Kansas. We would like to know how you feel about this new system of financing schools in our state. Are you **strongly in favor, somewhat in favor, somewhat opposed, or strongly opposed** to the new school finance system?

	Strongly Favor %	Somewhat Favor %	Somewhat Oppose %	Strongly Oppose %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Kansas Totals	**13**	**43**	**17**	**10**	**17**
Area of residence					
Northwest	6	49	20	11	14
Southwest	17	41	12	14	16
North Central	13	46	21	7	13
South Central	13	46	19	6	16
Sedgwick	17	42	13	5	23
Northeast	11	47	18	5	19
Wyandotte/ Johnson Counties	9	31	19	22	19
East Central	11	47	11	10	21
Southeast	20	47	17	6	10

Evaluating Public Officials

The U.S. Congress received the lowest grade for improving the public schools of the five government officials or institutions listed. Only 14 percent of respondents gave Congress an A or B, with barely more than one-half giving a passing grade of A, B or C.

By contrast, local school boards received the highest grade with more than 75 percent of respondents giving a passing grade and 51 percent giving an A or B. The question:

> Officials at all levels have publicly committed themselves to improvement of the public schools by the year 2000. At this point, what grade would you give to the following government officials for improving the public schools -- **A, B, C, D** or **Fail**?

As would be expected, answers to this question fell along political party lines.

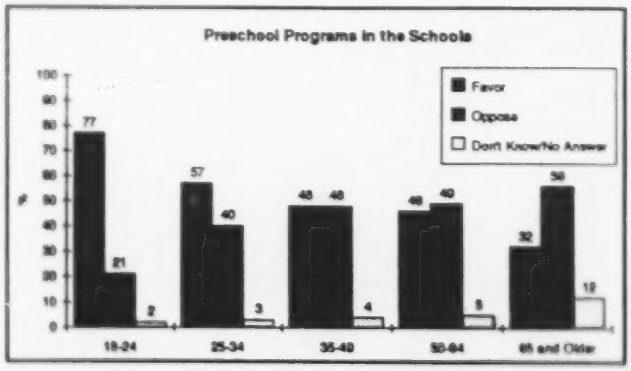
	A %	B %	C %	D %	Fail %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
President Clinton						
Kansas Totals	**6**	**20**	**31**	**14**	**15**	**14**
U.S. Congress						
Kansas Totals	**2**	**12**	**37**	**23**	**16**	**10**
Governor Finney						
Kansas Totals	**3**	**19**	**35**	**17**	**15**	**11**
Kansas Legislature						
Kansas Totals	**2**	**23**	**39**	**15**	**8**	**13**
Occupation						
Business and Professional	2	24	38	16	9	11
Homemaker	2	19	42	12	6	19
Skilled Labor	2	17	41	19	9	12
Unskilled labor	0	21	21	16	5	37
Clerical/Sales	2	17	57	6	8	10
Farming	0	19	50	23	8	0
Retired	4	29	35	14	4	14
Student	0	31	44	6	11	8
Unemployed	5	16	42	21	0	16
Local Board of Education						
Kansas Totals	**11**	**40**	**26**	**10**	**6**	**7**
Occupation						
Business and Professional	10	41	28	9	7	5
Homemaker	12	39	17	16	4	12
Skilled Labor	12	32	34	12	6	4
Unskilled labor	16	32	11	26	5	10
Clerical/Sales	6	35	39	6	6	8
Farming	4	54	31	4	4	3
Retired	13	47	18	8	3	11
Student	8	67	17	3	3	2
Unemployed	11	21	32	5	11	20

Preschool Programs in the Schools

Nationally, more people favor preschool programs in the public schools than oppose them. In Kansas, those who favored the idea gained a majority by one percent -- 48 percent to 47 percent. This was, however, a change from 1991 when only 45 percent favored preschool programs and 48 percent opposed. The question:

> It has been proposed that the public schools make preschool programs available to three and four-year-olds whose parents desire such programs. These programs would be supported by taxes. Would you favor or oppose preschool programs?

Parents, understandably, were more likely to favor the proposal than those without children. As in 1991, respondents age 18-24 overwhelmingly supported the idea with 77 percent; those 25-34 were less enthusiastic, but still supported the proposal with 57 percent.



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Reducing Teenage Violence

Whereas Kansans overwhelmingly support action by policymakers that would (1) restrict the possession of handguns by those under eighteen (93 percent), (2) treat 16-year-olds and above as adults in the court systems (77 percent), and (3) hold parents responsible in part for criminal actions of their children under age eighteen (73.5 percent), they strongly rejected the transfer of the state youth center from the jurisdiction of Social and Rehabilitation Services to the state prison system (28 percent).

A majority of Kansans also supported actions that would result in a curfew for all young people under age eighteen (68 percent), and would place more law enforcement officers in communities throughout the state (60.7 percent). Kansans were divided on whether more security guards should be placed in schools, and a slight majority of Kansans favored placing metal detectors in community schools. The question:

> A number of actions have been used around the nation in an attempt to reduce teenage violence. I will read a list of some of these actions. As I read each, please indicate whether you would support this action or not.

	Support %	Would Not Support %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
1. To treat those 16-year-olds and above as adults in our courts.	77	15	8
2. To restrict the possession of handguns by those under eighteen.	93	5	2
3. To transfer control of the state youth centers from Social and Rehabilitation Services to the state prison system.	28	53	19
4. To hold parents responsible in part for criminal actions of their children under age eighteen.	74	20	6
5. To establish a curfew for all young people under age eighteen.	68	27	5
6. To hire more law enforcement officers for your community.	61	33	6
7. To place security guards in your schools.	48	44	8
8. To have metal detectors at each of the schools in your community.	57	38	5

As might have been expected, those Kansans residing in larger cities or areas adjacent to large cities generally supported more stringent measures, whether it be action to restrict the possession of handguns or to hire more law enforcement officers. Females also were more supportive than males of specific actions to address violence. Attitudes of those in specific age groups on a specific course of action were similar; however, those 50 years of age or older were slightly more in favor of a definite course of action to curb teenage violence.

As noted earlier, a course of action that would restrict the possession of handguns by those under eighteen was overwhelmingly supported by Kansans (93 percent). All sub-groups based on age, income, occupation, etc., strongly backed such a course of action. However, diminished support, though still a view held by the majority could be found by those that indicated farming as their occupation (73.1 percent). Also, more support to restrict the possession of handguns could be found among respondents residing in Wyandotte/Johnson, Sedgwick, and the Northeast regions of the state of Kansas.

Restrict Handguns by Those Under Eighteen by Region

Region	Support %	Would Not Support %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Northwest	91	6	3
Southwest	95	5	0
North Central	86	11	3
South Central	90	9	1
Sedgwick	97	3	0
Northeast	97	0	3
Wyandotte/Johnson Counties	99	1	0
East Central	93	5	2
Southeast	95	5	0

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Composition of the Sample

Sex	%
Men	47.3
Women	52.7

Respondents with-	%
Children in School	37.1
No Children in School	62.9

Education	%
Non High School Graduates	6.3
High School Graduates	28.5
College (No Degree)	34.2
College (Degree)	30.5
No Answer	.5

AGE	%
18-24	7.0
25-34	19.5
35-49	34.7
50-64	17.8
65-Over	20.9
No Answer	.1

Political Affiliation	%
Republican	42.5
Democrat	26.8
Independent	20.6
Other	5.0
No Answer	5.1

Community Size	%
City or Town	67.8
Suburban Area	11.8
Rural	20.4

Home Ownership	%
Owned/Buying	76.8
Renting	22.6
No Answer	.6

Occupation	%
Business & Professional	32.8
Homemaker	11.2
Skilled Labor	15.5
Unskilled Labor	2.2
Clerical/Sales	7.4
Farming	3.0
Retired	19.1
Student	4.1
Unemployed	2.2
Undesignated/No Answer	2.5

Income	%
Less than 15,000	12.3
15,000-25,000	17.4
25,000-35,000	22.6
Over 35,000	40.6
No Answer	7.1

Area of Residence	%
Northwest	4.0
Southwest	6.7
North Central	12.8
South Central	14.3
Sedgwick	15.9
Northeast	7.1
Wyandotte/Johnson Co.	18.0
East Central	13.0
Southeast	7.3
Don't Know/No Answer	.9

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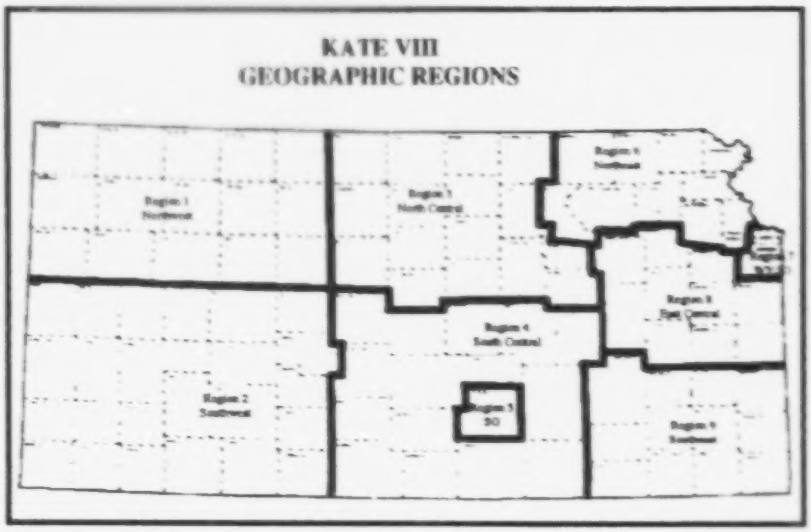
GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS



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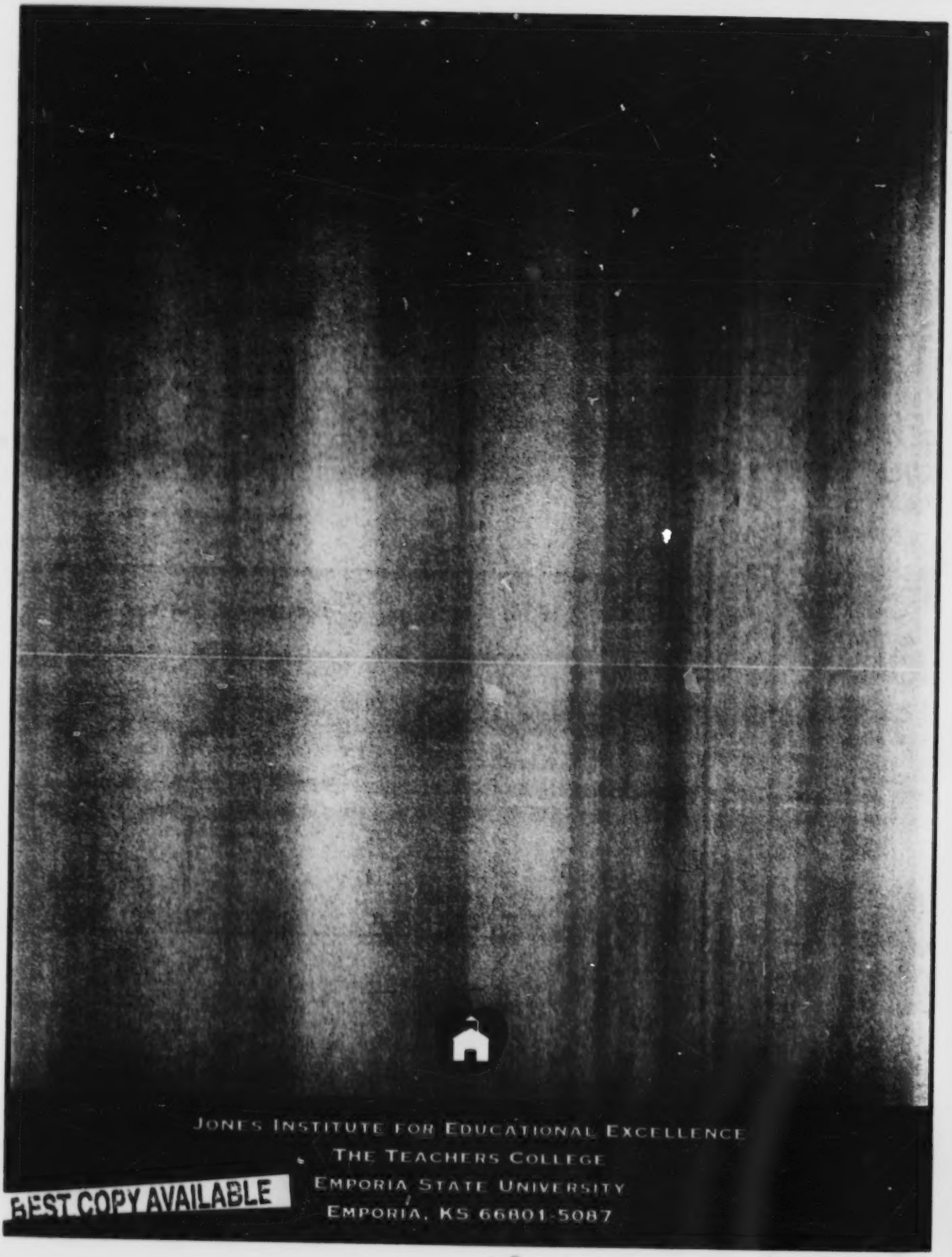

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